

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7645

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGUI 1762

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, CT

SUBJECT: BOKASSA'S FUTURE

REF: BANGUI 1713

1. IN HIS FAREWELL CALL ON ME, FRENCH AMBASSADOR LE CANNELLIER GAVE ME HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE STABILITY OF BOKASSA'S REGIME AS VIEWED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THREE YEARS' RESIDENCE IN BANGUI. LE CANNELLIER SHARES THE VIEW EXPRESSED REFTEL THAT THE FUTURE IS UNCERTAIN. HE HAS ALSO NOTED THE RISE IN STUDENT (AND TEACHER) UNREST, THE RECURRING PROBLEMS OF PAYMENT OF CIVIL SERVANTS AND THE GENERAL PARALYSIS OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN ECONOMY.

2. LE CANNELLIER IS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT BOKASSA'S HEALTH WHICH HE UNDERSTANDS HAS DETERIORATED, WITH PRESIDENT EATING LESS AND DRINKING MORE. ACCORDING TO LE CANNELLIER DURING RECENT GISCARD VISIT BOKASSA HAD THREE BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS TO DEAL WITH SERIOUS ANEMIA FROM WHICH HE IS SUFFERING. GOUT IS ALSO SAID TO BE A RECURRING PROBLEM WHICH CONTINUES TO TROUBLE THE PRESIDENT.

3. LE CANNELLIER IS, HOWEVER, EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS IN PREDICTING ANY IMMINENT CHANGE. BOKASSA, IN HIS VIEW, IS EXTREMELY TENACIOUS PHYSICALLY AND POLITICALLY. THE PEOPLE OF THE CAR ARE GENERALLY PASSIVE AND CONSTANT MANIPULATION HAS KEPT BOKASSA'S

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CLOSEST ADVISORS AND OTHER POTENTIAL LEADERS WITHOUT A POWER

BASE.

4. ON THE ECONOMIC SCENE LE CANNELLIER SEES NO EVIDENCE THAT BOKASSA IS WILLING TO TAKE EFFECTIVE STEPS TO LIBERATE THE ECONOMY FROM ITS CURRENT CONSTRAINTS BY RAISING PRICES PAID TO PEASANTS FOR CASH CROPS OR BY ENDING DIRECT GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IN ROAD AND FLUVIAL TRANSPORT COMPANIES WHICH ARE NECESSARY FOR SMOOTH OPERATION OF ECONOMY. FRENCH AID REMAINS THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DEVELOPMENT EFFORT.

5. LE CANNELLIER LEAVES BANGUI DEEPLY FRUSTRATED. HE HAS MANAGED TO KEEP FRENCH INTERESTS AFLOAT BUT HE IS QUICK TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MANY OF THOSE IN BOKASSA'S IMMEDIATE ENTOURAGE ARE DEEPLY AND EVEN PATHOLOGICALLY SUSPICIOUS OF FRANCE AND FRENCH MOTIVES. NEVERTHELESS HE BELIEVES THAT FRANCE AND THE WEST HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO SUPPORT BOKASSA, WHO REMAINS A MODERATE FORCE WORKING IN OUR INTEREST. THE ALTERNATIVES IN HIS VIEW, IS LIKELY TO BE A MORE RADICAL GOVERNMENT, SIGNIFICANTLY LESS SYMPATHETIC TO OUR INTERESTS. QUANTON

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